Lisbon, 12 January 1992

TL 3875

APPEAL

TO ALL PORTUGUESE AND INTERNATIONAL GROUPS

I am the mother of José Maria Saldanha Ribeiro, a Timorese student who was imprisoned on 24 November 1991 along with 5 other students in Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia. Two of the young people were released shortly afterwards, but my son, along with Fernando Araújo, António Matos and Clemente Soares, remained in prison and has been tortured. On 22 December the four were transferred to Jakarta, where they were put with 21 other students who had been detained during a peaceful demonstration in front of the UN representative's building, in Jakarta, to protest against the Santa Cruz massacre which took place in Dili on 12 November.

My son, who is 27 years old, finished his veterinary course in 1990 and is at present on placement fieldwork, the final report of which was due in December last; since he was arrested on 24 November he has remained in prison, awaiting trial it is said.

I have received word that he and the other students have been maltreated and tortured, that his face is unrecognisable and that he is unable to walk. For this reason, my son and Fernando Araújo have up to now not been allowed any visitors.

The Indonesian authorities have forged evidence in an attempt to incriminate them for things they did not do. It is said that, if they go to trial, they will not have access to a defence lawyer and that they are liable to be condemned to death if they are convicted of a breach of the anti-subversive laws.

As a mother, I appeal in the name of the mothers and families of all the Timorese prisoners both in Indonesia and East Timor, that you do all in your power to achieve their liberty and that, if they are brought to trial, they should be guaranteed the possibility of a defence and that international lawyers be present during all phases of the judicial process. I also appeal that a just solution is found without delay for the question of East Timor because many people are dying there each day.

Sebastiana Saldanha